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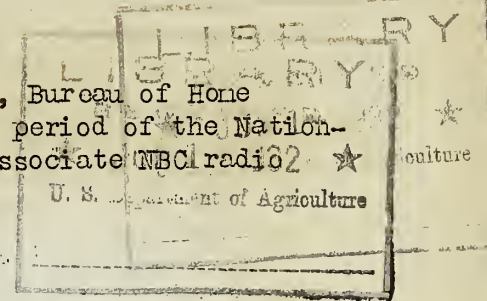
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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, May 3, 1932.



Someone has said that we who live in the United States have become "food conscious" in recent years, especially since the World War. Perhaps we have. Certainly since the meeting of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection in 1930 we have become CHILD HEALTH CONSCIOUS. And it is a fine thing that all of us who are parents have gotten this broader vision, embracing food, nutrition, and many other factors that contribute to the welfare of our children.

Perhaps one of the most valuable contributions of the nutrition section of the White House Conference has been to steer the emphasis where it belongs, to help us get a better perspective than we had before on the problems of good nutrition as a whole. This takes the popular focus off one vitamin or another, off the separate mineral elements we require, off calories, -- and throws the spotlight on the well-balanced diet and what it does for growth and development.

It is so easy just now when scientists are finding out new facts every day for us to hear and think for a time about the importance of nothing but vitamin D, or nothing but calcium or iron. And then in turn to feel that nothing is so important for our children's health as cod liver oil, or milk, or a green vegetable every day. It is essential of course that we know about these individual parts that make up a diet for growth and health, but we must see them as related parts and know the way they fit into the picture as a whole. Until we do, we are something like the little child who is trying for the first time to put a cutout picture puzzle together. Because he has had no experience and has no idea just what he is working toward, he toys with one piece after another, too often concentrating on just a few single pieces. It is only when he learns to watch for the pattern that the fitting of individual parts make him progress toward his goal, the complete picture. It is the same with us who are mothers, when we begin to think of protein, vitamins, minerals, and even of milk, cod liver oil and green vegetables only as small related parts of a whole, and keep the whole rather than the part constantly in mind, then it is that we accomplish the most for our children's best development, and with the least anxiety for ourselves.

Speaking of our children's "best development" makes me think of another very splendid point the White House Conference has stressed. It is that our ultimate goal is the best possible growth and health attainable for each individual child. Every child in any one family may not reach the zenith of perfection in development, because children start out in life with some limitations placed by heredity. And you know no two children even in the same family have inherited exactly the same physical and mental make-up. We must be sure that we are making it possible for each child to attain his normal growth and health. That may place him far beyond the

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average figure in a height-weight age table, or it may leave him somewhat below. The important thing for us to do is to study him as an individual. He may be short and stocky, or tall and lithe, but in either case he should have firm, healthy-colored flesh and hard muscles. His feet should be arched, his shoulder blades, hip bones and ribs padded with enough flesh to hide their sharp contours. There are other guides which your physician can give you to help you check up your children's development. Don't scorn average figures; just use them intelligently as rough guides, and remember that one of the points made by specialists is that each person has his own normal weight to attain, regardless of tables and this takes account of his build, his type, inheritance, and age, as well as his endurance, resistance to fatigue, to infection, and so forth.

I hope you are understanding me correctly. I am not for letting down on eager attentiveness to the way our children are growing and keeping healthy, nor do I feel that we should close our eyes and ears to the findings of the science of good nutrition. I hope only that in having our eyes and ears open we can remain level-headed and practical, fit each fragment of new subject matter into the niche that helps to make the whole picture more complete and perfect. I wish that we could see well balanced diets in blocks of days or of several days, instead of single foods or, worse still, single food nutrients like vitamins. And I wish that instead of worrying about a pound above or a pound below average weight, or an inch above or below average height, we would be looking for strong backs, sturdy legs, rosy cheeks, and normal pep and vigor. These are a few of the things that make us CHILD HEALTH CONSCIOUS.